7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

AFRICAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

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7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE BEMBA TRIBE—NORTH-EASTERN RHODESIA

By AUDREY I. RICHARDS

I. Bantu Political Organization—Some General Features

642
171

THE political systems of most of the Bantu peoples known to us show certain striking similarities, particularly as far as South and Central Africa are concerned. We are apparently dealing in each case with a tribal organization that is an outgrowth of a smaller lineage group, either split off from a parent stem in search of independence and new territory, or scattered by the onslaught of an enemy. In South, Central, and to a lesser extent East Africa most of the ethnic groups now known as tribes have a surprisingly short history of occupation of their present habitat —rarely more than 200 years and sometimes as little as 50 to 100. For this reason the original kinship structure of the immigrant people can still be recognized as the framework of their political system. Authority is almost invariably based on descent, whether within the family, the village, the district, or the nation, and the chief of the tribe combines executive, ritual, and judicial functions according to the pattern of leadership in each constituent kinship unit. Like the family head, he is a priest of an ancestral cult, believed in many cases to have a mystic power over the land, and he invariably claims rights over his people's labour and produce. The hierarchy of Bantu society allows only one type of authority, one basis of power, and one set of attributes in its leaders in most of the tribes so far described.

Besides this personal relationship established by tradition between the Bantu subject and his chief, yet another feature of the political organization depends on facts of kinship, emotional, legal, and ritual. Political power and prerogatives tend to become concentrated in the hands of descendants of the original lineage group, of which the chief is the living representative, and in many areas tribal cohesion seems very largely to depend on the predominance of this ruling line, whether the latter is to be reckoned as the first Bantu people to occupy the particular territory, or whether it conquered the earlier inhabitants and subsequently

[p. 83]

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

642 built up a new state. We find tribes called after the name of the
171 original leader of the nuclear community[1] (e.g. the Zulu, or the lineage groups of North Basutoland loosely described as Bamoheng, or Bamoketela): and others called after his clan (e.g. Kwena, Mangwato). The descendants of the first chief's clan may form a ruling caste (e.g. Zulu, Swazi, Bemba), and the total number of clans in the tribe may be arranged in order of precedence based on the tradition of the original migration into the area, or else the degree of relationship with the descent group of the chief.[2] The next of kin of the chief may play a definite part in the political organization, may claim rights to territorial chieftainships or villages, membership of tribal councils or smaller advisory bodies (e.g. the council formed by the chief's brother, sister, and near relatives among the Venda), or they may act as a regency council at the chief's death (e.g. Venda, Tswana, Swazi).

642 These then seem to be common features of Bantu political
171 organization—the position of the chief as head of a community
121 held together by bonds, real or fictitious, of kinship and as priest of an ancestral cult, and a political structure based on the dominance of a leading family line or clan. It is the differences in the machinery of government and in the incidence of tribal authority within this common pattern that make the interest of a comparative work like the present. In examining a particular case, there are a number of different conditioning factors which seem to account for these variations in political structure. Of these the most obvious appear to be the following: (*a*) the length of time the tribe has inhabited its present territory; (*b*) the type of immigration, whether by peaceful penetration, ejection of other units or their amalgamation;[3] (*c*) the emphasis placed on different prin-

[1] Schapera uses this term to describe a ruling group which has conquered and finally amalgamated other peoples often of foreign stock (cf. p. 57).

[2] cf. the heirarchy of Ganda clans: the precedence observed in tasting first-fruits in order of clan seniority among the Sotho peoples, and the respect still accorded to the Zulu and Swazi clans that have split off from the original royal stock, when it became necessary to contract marriages between members of one house.

[3] Compare the differences in size and homogeneity between single tribes largely of one stock with a single paramount chief (Swazi, Bemba); the congeries of small autonomous tribelets with similar cultural features but no supreme head (the swamp peoples of north-eastern Rhodesia or the low-veld tribes of northern Transvaal); or the amalgamation of a number of different ethnic groups into one empire by conquest or absorption (the old Luba Empire of the Congo, or that of the Zulu under Shaka or the Basotho under Moshesh).

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

ciples of social grouping such as descent, age, sex differences, or local ties by which the tribe may be integrated and the incidence of authority determined; (*d*) the economic bases of the people's activities which affect their degree of dispersal, the form of leadership required, and the economic values associated with political prerogatives; (*e*) the type of foreign rule to which the tribe is subject and the European elements that are effecting its political development, i.e. variations in policy from the administrative system known as Indirect Rule in Tanganyika, Northern Rhodesia, Uganda, to the more direct government by the white man in South Africa or the attempts made to create new political institutions for Natives, such as the Bunga system of the Transkei.

All these factors will be found to account for differences in political organization among a number of the kindred peoples known as the Bantu, and I shall try to analyse the Bemba system along these lines.

II. The Bemba Tribe

(*a*) *Tribal Composition.* The Bemba tribe at present inhabits the Tanganyika plateau of north-eastern Rhodesia, between the four great lakes—Tanganyika to the north-east, Nyassa to the east, and Mweru and Bangweolu to the north-west and west respectively. They number to-day about 140,000, very sparsely scattered over the country at a density of an average 3·75 per square mile.

The Bemba trace their origin to the area now known as the Belgian Congo and declare that they were originally an offshoot from the great Luba people which inhabits the Kasai district. The fact that the first ancestor of the Bemba is known as Citi Muluba ('Citi the Luban') substantiates this tradition, together with the cultural similarities still noted between the two peoples and the fact that Luban words, no longer understood by the Bemba commoner, are still used as part of the religious ritual at the paramount chief's court. The legends of immigration are numerous and circumstantial. The first arrivals apparently crossed the Lualaba River, which forms the western boundary of their present territory, about the middle of the eighteenth century, and travelled north and east until they established their first headquarters near Kasama, the present administrative centre of the Bemba country. From the sociological point of view, their history

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

174 dates from this period, since the composition of the invading group still determines the title to chieftainships, rank, succession to various offices, and the order of precedence of a number of the older clans.

The Bemba are to all intents and purposes a homogeneous group. They form a quite distinct political unit from the Bisa, Lala, Lunda, and other neighbouring tribes with similar traditions of origin and marked cultural and linguistic affinities. The Bemba declare that their forefathers found the country empty on their arrival, and, whether this is true or not, there seems to have been no strong opposition from whatever groups occupied the territory. The war-like habits of this tribe seem to have developed later, when they spread into the surrounding districts, pushing back their neighbours, such as the Lungu to the north-west, the Bisa and the Lala to the west and south respectively, and the Cewa to the east. The dominance of the Bemba chiefs was still more effectively enforced by the import of Arab guns in the nineteenth century. Where they did not dislodge the occupants of the surrounding country, their chiefs appointed members of the royal family or specially faithful subjects to hold the district for him (*ukulashika*) and to collect tribute of ivory tusks, grain, ironwork, salt, or other goods. The empire of the Bemba extended at one time right up into the Congo and to the shores of Lake Tanganyika, and they exerted influence over most of the present Bisa and Lala country to the south. With the coming of the white man at the end of the nineteenth century, their authority over the surrounding tribes collapsed, and though Bemba chiefs still rule over Bisa villages, e.g. in the Chinsali and Luwingu districts, it is rather a case of tribal admixture on the borders than a large-scale incorporation of foreign elements such as has occurred in the history of some of the Southern Bantu states. For the purposes of the present inquiry, we can reckon the Bemba as a homogeneous tribe with a history of settled occupation of their present territory lasting about 200 years.

101 [186] The distinctive marks of tribal membership are the following: (*a*) The common name *Babemba*, still uttered with a good deal of pride in such phrases as '*Fwe Babemba*' ('We, the Bemba'), used to preface bragging references to the exploits of the tribe as compared to those of surrounding peoples, who are still sometimes referred to contemptuously as slaves (*bashya*). (*b*) The common

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

language (*Cibemba*), which forms a distinct dialect in native eyes, although it does not differ very considerably from the neighbouring *Cibisa* or *Cilala*. (*c*) The tribal mark, a vertical cut on each temple about 1 in. long behind the eyes. (*d*) The common historical traditions of the people—even young men at the present day speak with pride of the coming of their fathers from Lubaland, and take delight in describing the military exploits of their ancestors and the ferocity of the old chiefs. (*e*) Their allegiance to a common paramount chief, the Citimukulu, whose overlordship of the Bemba territory is unquestioned.

(*b*) *Social Grouping*. (1) *Kinship*. The Bemba are a matrilineal tribe practising matrilocal marriage. Descent is reckoned through the mother and a man is legally identified with a group of relatives composed of his maternal grandmother and her brothers and sisters, his mother and her brothers and sisters, and his own brothers and sisters. His membership of this group determines his succession to different offices and his status in the community, although in a matrilocal society it only occasionally determines his residence. He also belongs to a wider descent group, the clan (*umukoa*, plur. *imikoa*) which is also traced in the woman's line. Each *umukoa* is distinguished by the name of an animal, plant, or natural phenomenon, such as rain. It has a legend of origin usually describing the split-off of the clan ancestors from the original lineage group, and an honorific title or form of greeting. Clans are in effect exogamous, since a man may not marry a woman he calls 'mother', 'sister', or 'daughter', and these terms are extended to the limits of clan membership on the maternal side. Through his clan affiliation, a man traces his descent, rank —if he belongs to the royal clan—rights to succeed to certain offices, such as hereditary councillorship (cf. pp. 100, 108), and claims to his relatives' help and hospitality.

Some clans have a higher status than others, according to whether their original ancestors arrived in the country as part of the following of the first Citimukulu, or alternatively, split off as a separate descent group later. Thus the crocodile clan (*Bena ŋandu*) is the *umukoa* of the first immigrant chief and stands highest in status (cf. 'Rank'), while various others, such as the fish clan, millet clan, &c., are said to be of similar antiquity. The hereditary councillors described later belong to these clans. All the *imikoa* are paired with opposite clans that perform reciprocal ritual

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

614 524 [616]

duties for each other, but this form of social grouping does not seem to affect the political organization at all at the present day.[1]

613

Within the clan, smaller lineage groups are recognized. These have no distinct name; though the Bemba often refer to them as 'houses' (*amaianda*, sing. *iyanda*) of the same clan. Such a house consists of the direct descendants of one particular ancestress traced back to three or four generations—five at the most. Within this smaller descent group, succession to office is usually limited, and chieftainships tend to become hereditary within three or four generations in such lines.[2] Social replacement of one man for another, either as an heir, an officiant in a religious ceremony, in fulfilment of a marriage contract (in the case of a woman), or in compensation for blood guilt in the old days, tends and tended to take place within the 'house' and not the clan, though members of the *umukoa* do replace each other if there is no one more nearly related within the *iyanda* to do so.

It is the smaller descent-group which is important in considering the influence of the ancestral spirits (*imipashi*, sing. *umupashi*) over the living, either as affecting the welfare of their descendants in general or as entering the wombs of pregnant women of that descent-group to act as guardian spirits to the children as yet unborn.

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Apart from the descent-group that determines his status, there is the body of kinsmen with whom a Bemba co-operates actively in daily life. These are the people with whom he may choose to live, and who gather together at any important event in his life, such as marriage, the birth of a child, illness, or a death. This group is known by a distinct term, the *ulupwa*. It has a bilateral basis, since it is composed of the near relatives on both sides of the family and also relatives in law. The balance between the powers of the maternal and paternal relatives is a very even one in Bemba society, in spite of the legal emphasis on the matrilineal side, and the ties uniting the members of the *ulupwa* are very strong.[3] Though it is

[1] cf. my 'Reciprocal Clan Relationships among the Bemba of North-Eastern Rhodesia', *Man*, December, 1937.

[2] The late Nkula, Bwalya Cangala, claimed, in the course of a succession dispute, that his near relatives, the children of his grandmother, Nakasafye, must now be considered as a separate 'house', as distinct from the children and grandchildren of her sister, Mukukamfumu II (cf. chart on p. 102).

[3] cf. my 'Mother-right in Central Africa' in *Essays presented to C. G. Seligman* (1934).

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

more usual to live with kinsmen on the matrilineal side, the grandfather or the mother's brother, yet a man may choose to live with his father's people by preference, and they play an important part at all the great ceremonial occasions in his life. The strength of the bilateral *ulupwa* is in fact one of the distinguishing features of the Bemba kinship system as compared with the strongly patrilineal societies of South Africa to my mind. It affects the political system in two ways. First, it allows for a much greater variety in the composition of the village, and more possibilities of change in its membership; and, secondly, we find in the case of the chief's relatives that the *ulupwa* of a ruler is an important unit in the whole political machine. A ruler's sons receive positions and office as well as his heirs, the maternal nephews; and his father's relatives and those related to him by marriage are also favoured, so that his grip over the country is a strong one.

(2) *Local Grouping*. The local unit in Bemba society is the village (*umushi*, plur. *imishi*). It contains on an average thirty to fifty huts, and is a kinship unit first and foremost. A village comes into being when a middle-aged or elderly man has acquired a big enough following of relatives to justify his applying to the chief for permission to set up a community on his own. He usually builds near other relatives, but land is so plentiful that it is perfectly possible for him to settle almost where he pleases within the chief's domain. The core of the village consists in the first place of the headman's own matrilocal family group, i.e. his married daughters with their husbands and children, and probably members of his matrilineal descent-group, i.e. his sisters and their children. Polygamy is rare. A chief will have a number of wives, say ten to fifteen, but commoners do not often have more than one.

A successful headman will be able to attract more distant relatives to him, both on the patrilineal and matrilineal side. On his death he may be succeeded by his heir, and such a local community may continue in existence with frequent changes in its composition, for two, three, or even more generations. Indeed, the village of the hereditary officials of the paramount chief (*bakabilo*, cf. pp. 100, 108) remain permanently fixed in one village. Thus in every district there are a number of new villages brought into existence by the chief's favour (*ukupokelafye kuli mfumu*) and therefore specially dependent on his support. These include communities newly gathered together by commoner headmen, as

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

621
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described, as well as existing villagers which have been given, with or without the inhabitants' goodwill, to a relative of the chief. Besides these new headmanships, there are those founded in the chief's predecessors' reigns and described as such, and on the whole less dependent on the present ruler. The proportion of new to old villages in Citimukulu's district in 1933 was as follows:

On 160 villages:

	per cent.
New villages	28
Villages with one previous holder of the headmanship	16
Villages with two previous holders of the headmanship	10
Villages with three or more holders of the headmanship	40
Villages constituted from remnants of two old villages	6

The skill with which he allots headmanships, and the positions in which he places his own relatives, contribute greatly to a chief's power.

621
166

In spite of the provisions for inheritance of headmanships, the Bemba village is an impermanent community from many points of view. It moves every four or five years, in keeping with the practice of shifting cultivation, and is liable to disruption at the death of an important member or at any loss of popularity by the headman. The plentiful supply of land and the many alternative possibilities of kinship grouping provide ample opportunities for a man to change from one village to another if he pleases, and in any case he is almost bound to live in a series of communities during his lifetime, e.g. the village of his birth, that to which he moves when he marries, any other village he may go to when he acquires the right to move his wife and family from her people's care, and lastly, in some cases, a community of which he may acquire the headmanship through succession to his maternal uncle. Hence, although a man's companions and fellow workers are those of his *umushi* and he speaks with some affection of the village of his birth or of his mother's people (*icifulo*), yet the bonds of kinship are much stronger than those of the impermanent local group. A Bemba is a member of a *ubupuse* and may move as he pleases to live with any of the relatives composing it, and he is the subject of a chief and may obtain permission to live in any part of the latter's territory, but his ties to a given locality are not necessarily strong.[1]

[1] *cf.* my *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia* (1939), chap. vii.

7: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

A chief's village (*umunumba*) is very much larger than that of a commoner. Inhabitants of the capital are composed of relatives of the chief, his followers, and also a number of families which moved there originally to win royal favour and have become accustomed to court life.[1] Since a chief's reputation depends largely on the size of his capital, and his councillors, courtiers, and administrative officers were drawn largely from his villagers, the *umunumba* is an important unit in the political machine. The late Nkula's village had about 400 huts when I visited it in 1931, that of the Citimukulu 150 in 1938. The capitals of pre-European days were evidently very much larger. These communities were divided into sections (*ifitente*, sing. *icitente*) and though nowadays there are nine *ifitente* at the paramount's village, there were formerly thirty to forty, according to native accounts.

The whole Bemba territory is divided into districts (*ifyalo*, sing. *icalo*). The *icalo* is a geographical unit with a fixed boundary and a name dating from historical times, e.g. the district of the Citimukulu is known as Lubemba, the country of the Bemba, and that of Mwamba, Ituna. These districts are territories originally allotted to members of the royal family, but once so divided they have never been sub-divided to provide smaller chieftainships for a new generation of princes as has happened in some parts of South Africa.

But the *icalo* is also a political unit. It is the district ruled over by a chief with a fixed title—the name of the first ruler to be appointed over each particular strip of land, always a close relative of one of the earlier Citimukulus. There are several types of chief, the paramount, who has his own *icalo*, as well as being overlord of the whole Bemba territory; the territorial chiefs, five or more in number, who have under them sub-chiefs who may rule over very small tracts of country or, rather, over a few villages.[2]

Each of these chiefs is known by the same title *mfumu* and each *icalo* is a more or less self-contained unit, a replica of the social structure of the other. Each capital has its own court, however small. Each chief has rights over the labour of his own villages. They work for him only and not for the paramount as happens among

[1] The phrase '*umuntu wumunumba*' ('inhabitant of the capital') is used to indicate a 'chief's man' or a person of specially polished manners and knowledge of affairs.

[2] Mwamba has as a sub-chief, the Munkonge, and the Nkula has Shimwalule, Mwaba, Mukulikile, Nkweto, &c.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

634 622 778 the Zulu, Swazi and other tribes with the regiment system. The *icalo* is also a ritual unit. At each capital are the sacred relics (*babenye*) of the first holders of the chiefly title and their ancestral spirits are thought to act as tutelary deities of the district, and are worshipped at the *umusumba*, at village shrines, and old hut sites throughout the country, and are also commonly supposed to act as guardian spirits to children born within the *icalo*.[1] Naturally the ritual and political organization of the paramount's capital is more elaborate than that of his inferiors, but even the smallest sub-chief maintains his miniature court and tries to ape the state of those above him, while the bigger territorial chiefs sometimes rivalled the power of the Citimukulu in the old days.

622 631 643 The territorial chieftainships are arranged in order of precedence, according to their nearness to the centre of the country—Lubemba—and the antiquity of their office. To the most important of these chiefdoms—the Mwambaship, the Nkulaship, the Nkolemfumuship, and the Mpepoship, for instances—the Citimukulu appoints his nearest relatives, the one succeeding the other in order of seniority. Thus the present Citimukulu, Kanyanta, has acted in turn as the Nkolemfumu, and the Mwamba before succeeding to the paramountcy (cf. chart on p. 102). On the other hand, the sub-chieftainships have tended to become concentrated in local branches of the royal family, and the paramount's strong grip over the country and his intimate knowledge of affairs at the courts of his fellow chiefs is certainly weaker in these outlying districts than in the case of chiefdoms ruled by his close relatives.

641 To the commoner, membership of an *icalo* means his allegiance to the chief of that territory. He will describe himself as an inhabitant of a district, such as *Icinga*, i.e. *mwine Icinga* or, alternatively, as the subject of its chief, Nkula, i.e. *mwine Nkula*, and both terms are synonymous. He may move from village to village within the *icalo*, but he remains his chief's man. The latter, in his turn, reckons his assets, not in terms of the size of his territory or its natural resources, but rather by the number of his people and in particular the villages he has under his rule.

554 565 (3) *Rank.* Rank is a marked feature of Bemba society. It is based on kinship, real or fictitious, with the chief. All members of the royal crocodile clan (*Bena ngandu*) are entitled to special respect, precedence on ritual and social occasions, and sometimes

[1] Hence the great preponderance of one or two birth-names in each district.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

to claims on the people's services. The potential heirs of a chief within his own branch of the family—that is to say, his brothers, maternal nephews, or maternal grandsons—are treated with particular deference. The former two categories are described as chiefs and addressed by the title *mfumu*, while the latter, only slightly lower in status, are referred to by a special name *bashikulu ba mfumu* ('grandchildren of the chiefs') and have their own ritual and social prerogatives.

Women of the royal line, the mothers, sisters, maternal nieces, and granddaughters of the chiefs are called *banamfumu* and are treated with much the same deference as are the men of the family. The mother of the paramount is highly honoured, succeeds to a fixed title—the *Candamukulu*—takes part in tribal councils, and has several villages of her own. The sisters of chiefs are privileged persons, protected and supported by their royal brothers, and usually granted one or more villages to rule. They are above the law in matters of sex morality, and a princess is allowed to have as many lovers as she pleases, provided she produces many children as potential heirs to the throne.

Not only members of the royal clan, but also persons who merely belong to the *ukupusa* of the chief, can claim high rank, i.e. his relatives on his paternal side, and his own sons. Some fathers of chiefs were nobodies and were quickly forgotten, but some have been famous men, honoured by their sons when the latter succeeded to the throne. The children of chiefs, though not members of his clan, and therefore not heirs, are also entitled to special privileges, and the *bana bamfumu* ('children of the chief') form a class of their own. They are brought up at the court, where they are treated in many ways more favourably than the heirs themselves and are able to claim headmanships and even chieftainships.[1] Even the half-brothers of chiefs, through other fathers (*bakaulu*), have rights to special treatment at court.

Added to this, already numerous class of royal personages are the descendants of close relatives of dead chiefs. Roughly speaking, any person who can claim to be maternal nephew, grandson, or son of a chief is succeeded by a man who continues to hold the same rank by the *ukupyanika* system described on p. 98. He is then addressed as 'chief' or 'son of chief'. The descendants of

[1] A few chieftainships are definitely handed on to 'sons of chiefs' instead of to 'chiefs', e.g. the Makasaship, the Lucembeship, or the Munkongeship.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

554 565 royal princesses are also entitled to honour, as well as those of wives of chiefs and even consorts of princesses. It will be seen, therefore, that the royal rank is a very large one. Any one who can possibly claim connexion of any sort with any chief, dead or living, does so, although the perquisites of rank are in most cases honour only and the possible favours of the chief, rather than any material assets. Every one outside the royal clan, or *ulupwa*, is an *umupabi*, or 'ordinary person', and in old days there was a slave class below—men and women captured in battle or enslaved to their own people for some crime. These individuals were known [575 567] as *bashya*. The term is now used as an opprobrious epithet especially for foreigners—often assumed to have been enslaved by the Bemba formerly. Slavery itself no longer exists.

561 (4) *Other Principles of Social Grouping*. Age is not a principle of social grouping among the Bemba. Precedence is reckoned on the basis of seniority, as in most Bantu societies, and there are special terms used to describe the different stages of life, suckling, infant, child, adolescent, unmarried, married, old, &c. But there [891] are no regiments based on age, as in South and parts of East Africa, and the boys initiation ceremonies so often found associated with such institutions do not exist among this group of the Central Bantu.

571 There are no occupational groups, with the exception of certain specialist fishing communities on the banks of the big rivers, and in the old days there were specialist hunters of big game. Secret societies, such as the *ubutwa*, which is common among neighbouring tribes over the Congo border, and has been adopted by the Bisa of the swamps, do not seem to have been introduced among the Bemba.

105 To conclude, Bemba society is as yet undifferentiated to any large extent. The tribe is an outgrowth of a lineage-group which has occupied its present territory for 200 to 300 years, and has remained more or less homogeneous. The original kinship structure is still apparent. All the social groups to which a man belongs are ultimately based on kinship—whether it is his household village or descent group, and there are no other forms of association such as age-sets to cut across this original grouping by descent. Rank consists of membership of the clan of the first immigrants to enter the land.

(c) *Economic Background*. The Bemba are an agricultural people

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

(c) Economic Background. The Bemba are an agri-
cultural people

like most of the Central Bantu group to which they belong. They keep no cattle. Tsetse-fly at present prevents their keeping stock over most of the country, but in any case they seem to have no pastoral traditions, whatever they may have had formerly. Thus they have no means of storing wealth as have the Southern Bantu. Their marriage contracts are fulfilled by service and not by the passage of cattle. In the old days military glory and the extraction of tribute from conquered peoples seems to have been the dominant ambition of the Bemba chiefs, and their wealth consisted in the size of their following and the amount of service they were able to command. This fact profoundly influences their position at the present day (cf. p. 116).

The soil of most of this district is poor and it has not attracted white settlement. The staple crop is finger millet (*eleusine coracana*), while some kafir corn, a little maize, legumes, and pumpkins are also grown. The people practise shifting cultivation of a primitive type, and the plentiful supply of land and the lack of any localized natural resources which might attract the inhabitants to settle in one area rather than another all affect the political system. As has been shown, they decrease the strength of local ties as against political or kinship affiliations, and they account for the fact that the power to distribute land is not an important prerogative of leadership in distinction to conditions in most Southern Bantu tribes.

Hunting and fishing contribute a small share of the food-supply only. Organized marketing does not exist, and under modern conditions no cash crop has been found for this area. This fact, together with the absence of opportunities for local employment, forces the adult male population to look for work outside the tribal area, with resultant effects, as will be seen, on the political system of the tribe.

(*d*) *White Administration*. The type of white administration introduced in this area is described on pp. 112–20.

III. Bases of Authority

The positions of leadership in Bemba society consist of the following offices: (*a*) *territorial rulers* (chiefs and headmen); (*b*) *administrative officers and councillors*; (*c*) *priests, guardians of sacred shrines, and magic specialists with economic functions*; (*d*) *army leaders* in the old days. Succession to all these offices is

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

based on descent in nearly every case. Chieftainships were limited to one clan, as we have seen; some of the councillorships (i.e. the *bakabilo*) are confined to a few of the older clans; and headmanships, though they may be won through the chief's favour, tend to become hereditary in their turn. All priestly offices are hereditary without exception, as is natural where an ancestral cult of this type is practised. Magico-economic specialists, particularly those in charge of fishing villages, usually acquire their powers by descent also, as do some of the doctors and diviners (*banga*). In each case the supernatural powers almost invariably correlated with political authority in this area are conferred by a rite, of great complexity, in the case of the succession of a chief, known as *ukupyanika*. For these reasons it is essential to study the dogma of descent by which these powers are believed to be transferred from one generation to another, and the legal rules of succession by which status and office are passed from one man to another.

(*a*) *The Dogma of Descent.* By dogma of descent I mean, first, those theories of procreation[1] which express a people's beliefs as to the physical contribution of the father and mother to the formation of the child, and hence the traditional conception of the physical continuity between one generation and the next; and next their beliefs as to the influence of the dead members of each social group over the living, and hence the social identification[2] of a man with the line of his dead ancestors.

Among the Bemba it is believed that a child is made from the blood of a woman which she is able to transmit to her male and female children. A man can possess this blood in his veins, but cannot pass it on to his children, who belong to a different clan. Physiological paternity is recognized. Children are often described as being like their fathers, and are expected to give the latter affection and respect although they have no legal obligations to them under the matrilineal system. 'We take our fathers' presents because they begot us,' they say. But it is nevertheless the physical

[1] This term was first introduced by Malinowski, who showed how the rules of matrilineal descent among the Trobriand islanders are buttressed by beliefs that the father makes no physical contribution to the birth of his child. Similar material published by Rattray from the Ashanti area shows a belief in a double contribution of blood from the mother and spirit from the father correlated with a bilateral emphasis on descent.

[2] To use a term employed in a very stimulating manner by Radcliffe Brown.

7: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

continuity of the mother's line of ancestors which is the basis of legal identification with her descent group.[1] A royal princess might even produce an heir by a slave father in the old days without lowering her child's prestige. The relationship between brother and sister, which is a very close one, legally and ritually, is based on the fact that the two were born from one womb, and in the case of the royal family it appears to be equally strong when the two are children of different fathers. These theories of procreation account, not only for the matrilineal descent of the Bemba, on which succession to chieftainship is based, but also for the rank accorded to the royal princesses as mothers of chiefs, and the headmanships and other positions of authority given them.

The Bemba dogma as to the influence of the dead over the living is also of the utmost importance as a basis for political authority. The spirit of a dead man (*umupashi*, plur. *imipashi*) is thought to survive as a guardian presence associated with the land or village site formerly inhabited, and as a spiritual protector of different individuals born in the same lineage group and called by the same name. The *imipashi* of dead chiefs become tutelary deities of the land they ruled over, and responsible for its fertility and the welfare of its inhabitants. They can be approached by the successor to the chieftainship at various sacred spots in the territory and at the sacred relic shrines (*bakenye*) in his own village. A chief is said to be powerful because he 'has great *imipashi*!' It is for this reason he is described as the *umwine calo*, 'owner of the land', and it is important to note that in every case the most important *imipashi* and the most sacred relics are those of the first chiefs to enter the land, or the first occupants of a chieftainship.

This dogma as to the influence of the dead over the living inhabitants of a district, or the members of a descent group, is very similar to the general Bantu pattern. But the Bemba belief in the social identification between the dead man and his appointed successor seems to me to be particularly complete. It is the basis of the belief as to the supernatural influence exerted by the chief in his own person as distinct from his direct approach to the spirits

[1] The patrilineal tribes on the Nyasaland border consider the Bemba theory of procreation as entirely ridiculous. One Ngoni expressed his contempt, thus: 'If I have a bag and put money in it, the money belongs to me and not to the bag. But the Bemba say a man puts semen into a woman and yet the child belongs to her and not to him!'

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

769 in prayer. When a man or woman dies, his or her social personality
775 must be immediately perpetuated by a successor who passes
622 through a special ritual (*ukupyanika*) and thus acquires the name, the symbols of succession (a bow for a man and a girdle for the woman), and the *umupashi* of the dead man. By this social identification, a man assumes the latter's position in the kinship-group, uses the same kinship terms and, in the case of a chief, it is almost impossible to tell when a man is describing incidents which took place in his own life or those of an ancestor two or three generations dead. So important is this social perpetuation of the dead considered that immediately after a death, before the successor has finally been appointed, a small boy or girl, usually a maternal grandchild, is chosen to inherit the name of the deceased temporarily (*ukunwa menshi*, 'to drink the water'). He or she is given some small piece of the latter's property and thereafter addressed as grandfather or grandmother, or whatever the right kinship term may be.

622 In the same way, a chief, once he has succeeded to the name,
789 the spirit, and the sacred relics of his predecessor, has magic
834 influence over the productive capacity of his whole territory. His
783 ill health or death, his pleasure or displeasure, his blessings or
784 curses, can affect the prosperity of the people, and even his sex life reacts on the state of the community.[1] For a chief to break a sex taboo is an act which may cause calamity to the whole people, and the rites by which he is purified after sexual contacts form
[643] one of the most important elements in the politico-religious ceremonial requiring the participation of thirty or forty hereditary officials (*bakabilo*) in the case of the paramount. Conversely, legitimate sex intercourse, especially as prescribed on certain
[624] ritual occasions, may actually be a health-giving influence. Any headman has a certain degree of supernatural influence in his own village as the successor to his predecessor's *umupashi*, but a chief
622 has considerably more. For all these reasons, ritual precautions
784 guard the sacred person of a chief. Special taboos must be kept to preserve the ritual purity of the ruler's sacred fire, and his sacred

[763] [1] There are rumours that chiefs were throttled by their hereditary councillors when they were obviously sick unto death, for fear they took 'the land' into the grave with them. This information was sent me by Mr. T. Fox-Pitt after I had left the country and was afterwards checked by Mr. Godfrey Wilson. In fact it is probable that in the old days the Bemba chiefs would fall under Frazer's definition of a 'divine king'.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

food, and to protect his person and that of the sacred relics from the contagion of illness, death, or sex defilement.[1]

The ritual by which a successor to the chieftainship is converted from an ordinary individual to a ruler with almost divine powers, has a good deal of political importance. It confers authority on the priests—in this case hereditary officials (*bakabilo*) who carry it out—and gives them, as we shall see, considerable power to check the chief himself. The complete ritual by which the *umupashi* of a dead ruler is liberated to guard the land he governed, and the new heir is installed, is too complex to describe here and now. Briefly speaking, it consists of the desiccation of the body during a period of a year, from one kafir-corn harvest to the next; its burial in a special grove (with human sacrifices in the old days); and the building of a shrine on the site of the deserted capital. To make the new chief, *bakabilo* must preside at the installation of a new great wife, arrange for the sexual purification of the royal pair, and the lighting of their new sacred fire.[2] They must hand over to the heir the heirlooms (*bubenye*) of which they have been in charge during the interregnum, and must finally found a new village and build again the sacred huts in which the relics are to be kept. Such a ceremonial may take eighteen months to two years and the participation of all the *bakabilo* and hereditary buriers (*bafingo*) in the case of the paramount; a lesser time and very many fewer priestly dignitaries in the case of the territorial chiefs. The secrecy and awe surrounding these ceremonies is, I believe, one of the ways by which the people's reverence for their chiefs is maintained.

(*b*) *Legal Rules of Descent and Succession.* Against this background of beliefs as to the continuity between one generation and another, the nature of descent and succession is defined exactly by legal rule. Descent in the royal family is reckoned to the time of first occupation of the country, and twenty-five to thirty Citimukulus are remembered. In the case of a territorial chief, the line of ancestors is not so long, and most are described as having been 'born in the country'. Most of the names honoured are those of men but some are those of women, and it seems that

[1] cf. my *Land, Labour and Diet in Northern Rhodesia* (1939), chap. xvii.

[2] Hence the importance of the great wife of the chief (*umukolo wa calo*) in the political life of the tribe and the belief that her behaviour also influences the welfare of the land.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

611 622 643 the first ancestress to inhabit a new chiefdom, or one who was a mother of numerous powerful sons and was thus able to found a new branch, could claim to be so respected.[1] But it is to the men holders of titles that most shrines are built.

[645] [767] The hereditary officials (*bakabilo*) also trace their descent to the first arrival for the most part, and tell stories which account for their right to the ritual offices they hold to-day, e.g. the *bafingo* who now bury the chief, claim to be the descendants of those who buried the first Citimukulus when on the march. This reckoning of descent to a definite epoch in history very clearly remembered is of service in maintaining the myth of absolute continuity of the chiefly lines. In actual fact, the present Citimukulu is a descendant of one Cileshye, who seized the throne from the occupier, Cincinta, only four generations back. This branch of usurpers is able to claim descent from the first Citimukulu all the same. The first ancestors are remembered very accurately and their sacred relics kept. The ensuing vagueness in the chain seems to be of no account.

602 622 In most types of succession whether to the name and spirit of a dead man or to his office, there are usually two or three potential heirs, and although there are certain rules of priority, it is practically never the case that there is one child known as heir to the chieftainship from birth and brought up as such, as occurs in those South African tribes in which the eldest son of the great wife must always succeed. A Bemba chief, or commoner, is succeeded by his brothers in order of age, next by his sister's children, and, failing them, by his maternal grandsons. Difficulties arise when there is a choice between an older classificatory 'brother', not a sibling, but possibly a mother's sister's son, or an even more distant 'brother' still, and a young man, a maternal nephew who is the child of the deceased's own sister, with whom, as we have seen, his ties are very close. Here the principles of primogeniture conflict with that of propinquity of kinship, in the case of a branch of a family that has been in existence for three or four generations, and it is probable that in these cases the nearest heir is appointed unless he is manifestly unsuitable, when the more distant 'brother'

[1] e.g. Bwalya Cabala, the first ancestress said to have been fetched from Lubaland by her brothers when the latter had occupied what is now Bembaland; or the Nakasafye, grandmother of the present Nkula, who is described as having started a new line, and was evidently a woman of great character as well as the mother of many sons.

7: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

or 'maternal nephew' is selected. I never heard of a regent being appointed for a young man as is commonly done in those Bantu tribes where the heir to the throne is known from his time of birth.

The situation is more complicated in the case of succession to chieftainships, since through the custom of inheriting one big territorial chieftainship after another within the paramount's immediate family, a tradition has grown up that, e.g., the holder of the Mwambaship should always succeed to the Citimukulushiip, whatever the priority of kinship. This claim was put forward in the last succession dispute (1925) and is commonly supported by Government officials who naturally prefer a fixed system of succession to the discussion of rival candidates' rights that seems to have been the older procedure. There is also a tendency becoming more and more evident for certain of these bigger chieftainships to be confined to sub-branches of the main royal line, as distinct from sub-chieftainships which are nearly always given to descendants of local branches of the crocodile clan (e.g. the Mwabaship). This constant growth and separation of different sub-lines or houses of the royal clan seems to have been continuous in the past. The chart of the present central branch of the *Bena ŋandu* should make the situation clear. It will be seen that the first and second Citimukulus in this line were siblings, and were succeeded by another pair of own brothers—Citimukulu III and IV, the sons of the first ruler's eldest sister, Candamukulu. The paramountcy then passed to the line of a younger sister, Bwalya Cabala, tradition stating that the eldest maternal nephew of Citimukulu III and IV, then holding office as Mwamba, refused to succeed to the office for various reasons. The title then passed to another pair of brothers in succession, Citimukulu VI and VII, the sons of a younger daughter of Candamukulu—Nakasafye. Hence the famous dispute of 1925 just referred to, between Kanyanta, now Citimukulu, and his mother's mother's sister's grandchild, Bwalya Cangala, then holding the Nkulaship, and reckoned as Kanyanta's classificatory brother. Bwalya claimed that he was own maternal nephew of the dead chief, Ponde, and Kanyanta that he came of an older line and that it had now become established that the Mwambas always succeeded the Citimukulus. The Government supported the latter claimant, but there seems to have been very little to choose between the

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643
173

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

[P. 102]

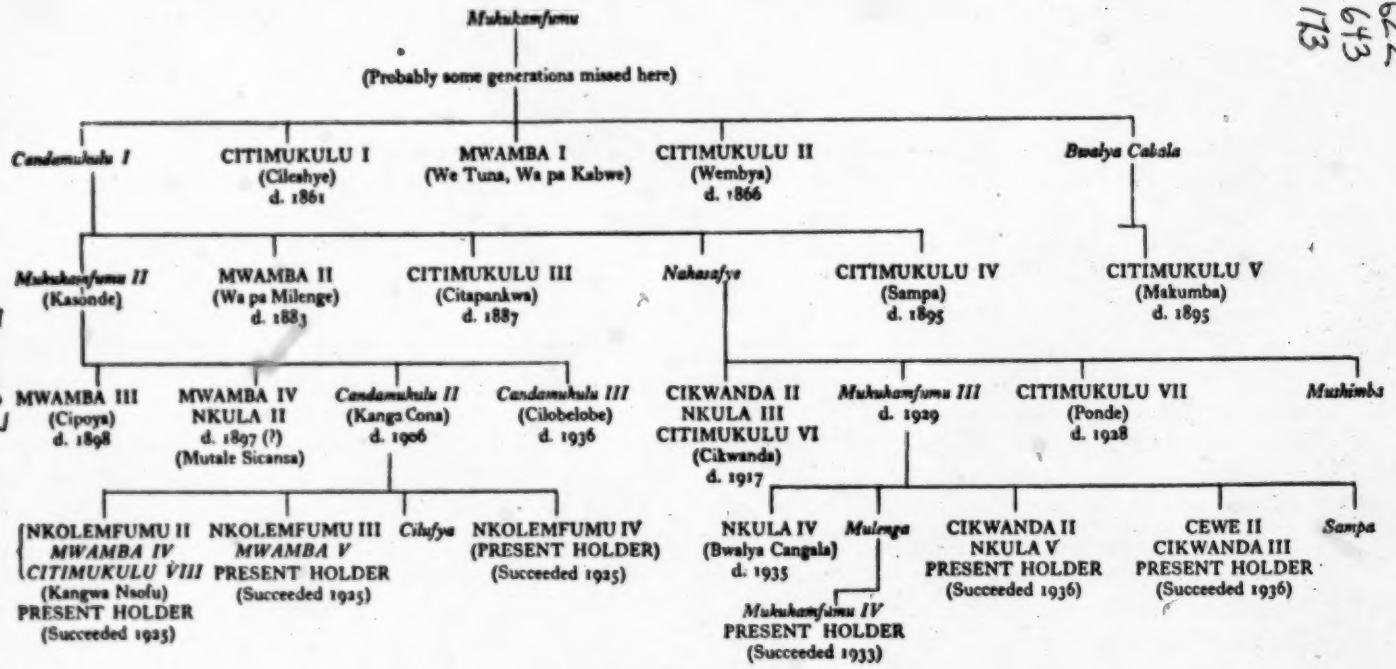

Chart showing succession in central branch of the royal family (taken from a table made by E. B. H. Goodall and kept at the Government Office, Kasama)

Men shown thus: CITIMUKULU Women shown thus: *Candamukulu*

NOTE—(1) Two or more titles means the successive holding of two or more chieftaincies. (2) Citumukulu I designates the first Paramount in *this particular lineage group*.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

legal rights of the two rivals, and the rather complex machinery of tribal deliberation on such matters (cf. p. 109) was not called into motion.

The chart also shows clearly the way in which certain chieftainships have also tended to become fixed in different family lines of this main branch of the *Bena ŋandu* even during the last four generations, i.e. the Mwambaship, the Nkolemfumuship, the Mpepoship in the line of the chieftainess Mukukamfumu, and the Nkulaship, the Cikwandaship, and the Ceweship in the line of Nakasafye. The separation between these two branches will probably become wider and wider with time. In the case of the outlying sub-chieftainships, this separation off of local family lines of the royal clan has proceeded even further. To conclude, there are definite rules of succession according to Bemba kinship but the type of matrilineal succession usually provides two or three possible heirs, and in the case of the bigger chieftainships there are a number of different factors, such as the paramount's control over the more important *ifyalo*, the traditional order of succession to different offices, local feeling in the case of sub-chieftainships, and last, but not by any means a negligible point, the personal qualities of the candidates themselves.

IV. Functions and Prerogatives of Leadership

The functions of the territorial heads, i.e. chiefs and headmen, seem to be derived from two sources—the position of the leader as head of a kinship group and his role as the representative of a line of dead ancestors in a particular district. In the case of a headman, these two aspects are indistinguishable, while the latter predominates where a chief is concerned.

(*a*) *The Headman*. Bemba headmen are described as looking after, keeping, or actually 'herding the people' (*ukuteka bantu*). As senior kinsman of most of the villagers, a headman is responsible for the discipline of the children and young people; he hears cases informally and directs some economic activities. There are few activities carried out by the whole community in common except fishing and hunting, but besides organizing these latter pursuits a good headman initiates each new agricultural process and encourages and criticizes the younger men and women. Land is not often a matter of dispute in this area. The headman does not allot individual plots, but listens to cases should any arise. He is said to

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

'feed his people' and actually does so if they are in need, besides dispensing hospitality to strangers.

The head of the village acts as its ritual head. In the old days, he put up one village shrine to his own ancestors and one or more others to the dead chiefs of the land. This is still done in out-of-the-way parts of the country and in most places, I think, prayers are offered to these tutelary deities, whether shrines are built to them or no. The headman, like the chief, also influences the life of the community through his own person. He must 'warm the bush' (*ukukafye mpanga*) by an act of ritual intercourse with his wife before the huts of a new village are occupied. He blesses seeds for sowing, axes for tree-cutting, and first-fruits. His fire stands for the life of the community as a whole and must be ritually lighted when occasion demands. He presides over the special divination rites connected with village activities, such as the founding of a new community or the death of a member, and blesses new babies or individuals who are sick.

In the political hierarchy, the headman has his definite place. No Bemba may cultivate land except as a member of a village group, and the headman is responsible for organizing the supply of tribute and labour which must be paid to a chief by the community as a whole. He accompanies his villagers to court when they have cases to present and often speaks for them. He transmits the orders of a chief to his people and nowadays those of the Government. His prerogatives are few in number. As head of a kinship-group, he can command personal service from his younger relatives and should be able to exact one day's work from his people on the first day of tree-cutting and sowing. He is always given tribute of beer or meat. But probably, apart from these few economic privileges, the Bemba headman values most his position of authority, his small following, and the favour of his chief.

The sanctions for his authority nowadays are mainly his popularity, together with the strength of kinship feeling, and the belief of the Bemba that it is dangerous to allow an older relative to die injured. His supernatural powers were a source of strength in the old days, but to a very small extent now, and it must be admitted that the forces which keep a village together are not very strong. It is a constant fear to a headman that his people will melt away.

(*b*) *The Chief*. The functions of the different types of chief

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

differ only in degree. All are said to look after their people, to 'work the land', and, with reference to their supernatural powers, to 'spit blessings over the land' (*ukufunga mate*). Their political duties consist in the administration of their capitals and also of their territories as a whole. A large *umusumba* means plenty of coming and going, enough workers for joint enterprises, a large panel of advisers for court cases, many messengers to keep in touch with the surrounding villages—in short, the possibility of keeping the tribal machine running. To maintain and even augment such a community by his popularity and his reputation for generosity is one of the chief's important political tasks. He has also to keep contact with the people widely dispersed over his *icalo* and to appoint new headmen, amalgamate old villages, and decide as to the selection of heirs to old titles. On his success in these last duties the integration of his people as a political unit largely depends.

As a judicial authority, the chief presides over his court with advisers selected from his village, and in the old days he alone could hear charges of witchcraft and, in the case of the greater territorial chiefs, put the accused to the poison ordeal (*mwafi*). In the economic sphere, he initiates agricultural activities by performing the customary ceremony before each begins; he makes big gardens with the aid of tribute labour from which he is able to fill large granaries and thus find the wherewithal to feed his following; he controls directly certain fishing and hunting enterprises: and he criticizes and directs the gardening work of his own villagers.[1]

The ritual duties of a chief consist in the observation of the taboos for the protection of his own person and the safety of the sacred relics at his disposal, and the carrying out of a number of rites for the sake of his whole *icalo*—in the case of the paramount, for the whole tribe. These last consist of economic rites, tree-cutting, sowing, and first-fruit ceremonies, those performed in case of national calamity, and for success in war in the old days. He was formerly bound to protect the people from witches and used to employ a special doctor at his court to destroy, by burning, the bodies of those found guilty of this offence.

In the old days the chief organized military expeditions,

[1] cf. my *Land, Labour, and Diet in Northern Rhodesia* (1939), chap. xiii, for a full account of the chief's economic powers.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

622 701 although he did not necessarily take part in the fighting. As one chief put it, 'If we were killed, the whole *icalo* would fall to pieces'. The ruler had certain military captains in his following, could call up men to fight, direct their operations from afar, and arrange for the performance of war magic for success before battle and for purification from the stain of blood after it.

622 651 The prerogatives of a chief consist in rights over the labour of his people, who are required to do a few days' tribute labour each year and to answer sudden calls for help if made; and also claims to tribute in kind, usually paid in the form of an annual present of beer and/or grain, and portions of animals killed in the hunt.[1] It is through this tribute that he is able to pay his advisers, servants, labourers—and soldiers in the old days. Formerly, he maintained rights to certain monopolies, such as ivory tusks, salt from the big inland deposits at Mpika, and guns and cloth traded [567] from Arabs. Slaves or booty captured by the army were brought to him, and he had a number of his own people enslaved for various offences. Besides these economic prerogatives, he commanded great, one might almost say abject deference, and had the satisfaction of seeing his following grow, his authority increased, and his power over life and death over his subjects recognized.

622 The sanctions for a chief's authority are numerous, and they were still greater in the old days. The most important of these has already been described as the people's belief in their rulers descent from a long line of ancestors and the supernatural powers thought to be so conferred. Besides this, a reputation for generosity and a system by which advancement could only be attained through [687] royal favour naturally bound people to him. Much of his power also rested in the old days on force. A chief practised savage mutilations on those who offended him, injured his interests, laughed at him or members of his family, or stole his wives. A number of these mutilated men and women still survive in Bemba country to-day. Command over the army and over the supply of guns also lay in the chief's hands and there is no doubt that the greatness of the *Bena ŋandu* rested to a large extent on fear. The people explain that the royal family were named after the crocodile because 'they are like crocodiles that seize hold of the common people and tear them to bits with their teeth'.

[1] All these dues are very much harder to exact nowadays (cf. p. 116).

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

V. The Machinery of Government

Within each district there are a series of officials, messengers, &c., who carry out the activities of government and the different forms of ritual on which the chief's power depends. Some of these are personal followers of the chief promoted by him for their special loyalty (e.g. the *bafilolo*, *basano*), while others are hereditary officials who are more independent of their ruler's favour (e.g. *bafilolo* and *bafingo*). All these different dignitaries can be classed under various functional heads, i.e.:

(*a*) *Administrative.* These include the executive officials in charge of business in the *umusumba* and those responsible for carrying out the chief's orders in the *icalo* at large. Within the capital the most important are the heads of divisions (*bafilolo*), who are appointed from among the chief's personal friends. These are charged with keeping the peace of the village, organizing the tribute labour from the capital, allotting land for cultivation, which is often necessary in the bigger settlements, arranging hospitality for visitors—an important task at the capital—and acting as a panel of advisers on all occasions (cf. 'Judicial', below). Besides these elder men, there are at the *umusumba* a number of courtiers and in the old days young men (*bakalume ba mfumu*). Young boys, often members of the royal clan, were, and still occasionally are, sent to court to be educated there, and some families remain as courtiers for several generations apparently. All these act as messengers, attendants, and in the old days took duty as executioners.

As regards the country at large, the main difficulty was keeping in touch with the scattered villages. The Bemba have no general meeting like the *pitso* of the Sotho peoples or the *libandla* of the Nguni. For the chief's orders to be conveyed to his villages, messengers have to go to and fro. Other officers are required to recruit the tribute labourers and to demand beer or produce for the chief, and to apprehend criminals. Since some villages are sixty miles or so from the capital, an enormous amount of time is spent in coming and going in this way and even with the introduction of the bicycle a great many messengers of one sort or another are still required. In the old days courtiers and younger relatives of the chief acted in this capacity. Nowadays they have anything from four to

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

634 202 twelve uniformed messengers, *kaparus*, and for the rest they go short of service.

634 701 (*b*) *Military*. There was no general military organization in this tribe, but attached to each big court were one or two captains (*bashika*). Some of these were hereditary, with ritual functions connected with war magic, and others appointed at the chief's will. They now act as specially trusted messengers.

634 692 695 (*c*) *Judicial*. There is no fixed composition to a Bemba court, although its procedure is laid down by custom. At a small chief's court, the elderly men of the village attend, while the *bafilolo* act as advisers at the big *imisumba*. Cases go on appeal from sub-chief to chief, chief to paramount, and in the event of a case of extreme difficulty presenting itself, the Citimukulu can summon from their villages some of his hereditary priests or councillors, the *bakabilo* (cf. below). Witnesses are brought by each party to a case and are marshalled by the *bafilolo*. The senior man present claps as each point is made to mark the recognition of the court, and the chief himself finally sums up and gives judgement. The advisers speak when asked a point of precedent or law, and influence the chief's final decision by black looks or alternatively enthusiastic clappings of the hand.

634 [623] (*d*) *Advisory*. There is no council or meeting of all the adult men of the tribe for special occasions, as among many Southern Bantu. Sub-chiefs have a panel of village elders and relatives to advise them, while the biggest territorial chiefs have hereditary officials who combine political and judicial with ritual functions. In the 645 554 case of the paramount, these officials—the *bakabilo*—number between thirty-five and forty and form an advisory council on special matters of State. The *bakabilo* have been described as having descent as long as that of the chief himself in many cases and possess sacred relics in their own rights. The power of these relics is so strong that the Citimukulu is not permitted to pass through their villages for fear that one chieftainship should harm the other. *Bakabilo* are immune from tribute, wore special feather head-dresses in the old days, and even now claim special respect equal to that given to a chief when travelling about the country. They call themselves *Fwe Babemba* ('We, the Babemba'), may not leave the central territory (Lubemba) for long, must be buried within the royal district, and keep sex taboos similar to those of the chiefs. They succeed by a special accession

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

ceremony and are buried according to particular rites. They are divided into groups according to the order of their ancestors arrival in the country, and each has a special office based on the privileges of his original ancestor, e.g. the care of the royal drum, the right to sit on a stool in the chief's presence, or the duty to call him in the morning by clapping outside his door.

The main duties of the *bakabilo* in native eyes are ritual, as has been described. They are in charge of the ceremonies at the sacred relic shrines and take possession of the *babenye* when the chief dies. They alone can purify the chief from the defilement of sex intercourse so that he is able to enter his relic shrine and perform the necessary rites there. They are in complete charge of the accession ceremonies of the paramount and the bigger territorial chiefs, and some of their number are described as *bafingo*, or hereditary buriers of the chief. Besides this, each individual *mukabilo* has his own small ritual duty or privilege, such as lighting the sacred fire, or forging the blade of the hoe that is to dig the foundations of the new capital.

Besides their priestly duties, the *bakabilo* acted as regents at the death or absence of the chief, and any question of succession or other matter of tribal importance is placed before the *bakabilo*, and the big ceremonies I witnessed at the chief's capital were all made occasions of such discussions. The procedure is complex, but an effective method of deliberation. The paramount sends two special hereditary messengers, also *bakabilo*, to place the matter before the council. The senior members speak and if a difficulty arises they refer the matter to the head priest of the land, the Cimba, who sits apart with his own following, and gives decisions on matters of tribal precedent or suggests rewording decisions to be carried to the chief. Some of the discussion is carried on in archaic *cibemba*.

The importance of the *bakabilo's* council is the check it holds over the paramount's power. These are hereditary officials and therefore cannot be removed at will. Two or three of the *bakabilo* have been chased out of the country in the past for overweening pride, according to tradition, and the Cimba was removed from office in 1934, but only after the tribe had suffered for many years from the results of a species of megalomania to which he seemed to be subject. Otherwise the *bakabilo* are immune from the chief's anger and exert a salutary influence over him by refusing

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

645 to perform the ritual functions that are necessary to the chief's state.[1]

Other advisory officials consist of the near relatives of the chief himself. These do not attend discussions as to succession to chieftainships, but are constantly informed of the progress of affairs. The paramount's mother and the Makasa (the eldest 'son' of the chief) play an important part in this way. In the past senior members of the royal family seem to have intervened occasionally when some chief was behaving too outrageously, as, for instance, in the case of a sub-chief, Fyanifyani, apparently attacked by a sort of blood-lust. This man was removed from his office, according to history.

642 645 In brief, the Bemba system of government is not a democratic one in our sense of the word. The elder commoner has fewer rights to speak on tribal matters than have the Zulu, Swazi, or even some of the Sotho peoples. The affairs of the *icalo* are in the hands of a body of hereditary councillors whose offices and most of whose deliberations are secret. But I was impressed by the sense of tribal welfare which these *bakabilo* showed, and they were quite able to discuss and shrewdly adapt some old tribal precedent to modern conditions. Their strength, as regards tribal government at the present day, is their *esprit de corps* and sense of responsibility; their weakness, the fact that in the eyes of the people and the Government their function is mainly a ritual one.

VI. The Integration of the Tribe

619 The integration of the tribe depends chiefly on the sentiment of tribal cohesion and loyalty to the paramount, and the means by which the activities of the different districts are brought under one control in this widely dispersed group. The dogmas of kinship have been shown again and again to be the basis of tribal feeling and of the allegiance given to the territorial and paramount chiefs. In other Bantu tribes there is some tribe-wide organization such as the Nguni regiment system, that seems to act as an integrating force. There are also forms of public ceremonial at which all the adult men of the tribe are gathered, or all the warrior classes. The first-fruit ceremonies of the Swazi or of the Zulu in

[1] During 1934 I found the paramount living in grass huts. He was unable to build his new village because the *bakabilo*, indignant at his behaviour, refused to perform the foundation ceremony for the new community.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

the old days are an example. The big tribal councils of most of the African peoples described as being attended by 'every one' and in reality very large meetings, must also act as occasions when the loyalty of the tribe is fostered. Among the Bemba much of the tribal ritual is secret, as has been shown, and the advisory council is composed of what might be called an aristocratic caste. If the *bakabilo* meet in sitting on the open ground in the capital, as I have seen happen, they use archaic language on purpose, so that the common people cannot understand. It is no occasion for high-flown oratory or any of the demagogue's arts. On the other hand, the Bemba chiefs were formerly considered very nearly divine, and the belief in their supernatural powers is still strong enough to integrate the tribe. The sacredness of the royal ceremonial largely depends on its secrecy and the fact that only persons of the right descent can take their part in the ritual. The ordinary people do not attend the ceremonies except in the case of some inhabitants of the capital, but they value their secret nature and speak contemptuously of the Bisa and neighbouring tribes with less complex rites. The number of the *bakabilo*, each scattered through the chief's *icalo* and each with his own ritual function, sometimes secret from his own fellows, also adds to the strength of the whole ceremonial system. Each is insistent that *his* part is absolutely essential to the welfare of the tribe, and his own village is convinced to that effect, too. Another integrating factor is the belief in royal descent and presence in the society of such a large number of men and women who claim chiefly rank. These are dispersed all over the country, generally in charge of villages, and they naturally support the chiefs from whom they derive their power.

As regards the activities of the different *ifyalo*, it has been seen that these are self-contained units and there is no regular provision for regular meetings of *icalo* heads. They are linked by the overlordship of the paramount, who acts as judge of their court of appeal, and the different tiny states are bound together because of the close relationship between their different chiefs. Messengers constantly go from one court to another to inquire after family matters, the children of one chief are sent to be brought up at the capital of another, the chiefs themselves take office first in one *icalo* and then another, and even the Citimukulu takes no important step, ritual or political, without consulting his 'brothers', the big territorial heads.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

622 643 782 But here again ritual is one of the big integrating forces. The Citimukulu can initiate a series of sacrifices (*silupepo lukalamba*), which start at his relic houses and spread to all the shrines throughout the land. The *bakabilo* are sent from Lubemba to bury any of the bigger territorial chiefs who die in their distant *ifyalo* and to install the new heir. The paramount prays for rain on the rare occasions when it is required, on behalf of the whole tribe. Thus for ritual purposes, in spite of the quarrels and jealousies between different lines of the royal family, the whole Bemba country can be said to act as a whole and to be conscious of its unity. If the paramount chief were to turn Christian before the political institutions of this tribe have been considerably adapted, tribal cohesion would, I think, be very much weakened, whether temporarily or permanently.

VII. Post-European Changes

177 642 643 The advent of British rule in Northern Rhodesia changed at once the position of the Bemba chief and his political machinery, and it continues to do so in an increasing variety of ways. Some of these changes are due to the actual introduction of new authorities into the area—whether Government officials, missionaries, or other Europeans—who have either replaced the old Bemba officials, divided the spheres of authority with them, or introduced entirely new conceptions of the functions of government itself. Others seem to be mainly the result of changed economic conditions, particularly the introduction of money, the institution of wage labour, and the provision of opportunities for money-making in industrial undertakings outside the territory. Such factors, over which the Administration has often little direct control, have inevitably affected the position of the Bemba chief. They have altered the people's conception of authority, destroyed the whole basis of labour on which the powers of the chief depended, and the old correlation between political authority, economic privilege, and military strength.

177 The total effects of white domination on the Bemba political organization have not yet proceeded to their full length, but it will be well to indicate some of the changes produced by the introduction of a new machinery of government, e.g. the alteration in the balance of the old tribal system, and the resultant weakening of the personal relationship between subject and chief upon which

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

the whole structure of authority depended. To do so, it will be simplest to try to indicate the position when the Europeans first took over the administration of the country, and to compare this with the situation produced by the introduction of a modified system of Indirect Rule in 1929.

(*a*) *New Authorities Introduced.* In 1900 north-eastern Rhodesia was placed under the control of the British South Africa Company by an Order-in-Council after its officials had established posts in or near the Bemba country at Kasama, the present administrative centre of the northern province of Northern Rhodesia, in 1899 and at Mirongo, near the present Chinsali, in 1896. This administration continued until 1924, when the Colonial Office assumed control. To the Bemba, considered a particularly fierce and warlike tribe before the arrival of the white man, the superior force of the new administration must have been immediately apparent. The officials of the British South Africa Company were better armed. They at once intervened in a case of disputed succession over the Mwambaship which had then fallen vacant, and appointed their own nominee instead of his maternal uncle, who was endeavouring to take the title by force. One by one the functions of the old chiefs were taken over by the new authorities. New courts of law were introduced, and though some Native customary law was administered by the white officials, yet here as elsewhere customs considered 'repugnant to natural justice and morality' were prohibited, this category was such a large one[1] that to the natives it must have seemed like the introduction of a new code. Certain totally new offences were also created, e.g. the killing of elephants and a number of other forms of game, the digging of game-pits, and the use of primitive iron-smelteries. The penalties for legal offences were changed too. For mutilation at the hands of the chief, enslavement, and compensation paid to the injured party was substituted imprisonment, beating, fines paid to the Government, and the death sentence. New demands on natives' goods and services were also made, such as the hut-tax of 3*s.* 6*d.*, afterwards changed to a poll-tax, which now stands at 7*s.* 6*d.*, and the enrolment of natives as carriers, road-builders, &c., in Government pay. The B.S.A. administration recognized the Bemba chiefs and in 1916 defined their authority more

[1] e.g. accusations of witchcraft, murders for ritual purposes, the use of the ordeal in determining guilt, &c.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

177 642 exactly,[1] but they were used in the main as executive officials and shorn of most of their authority and their privileges, such as the owning of slaves, the possession of arms, the right of mutilation, the power of administering the poison test, and the collection of the ivory tusks.

177 641 The sanctions for the power of the new administration were, in native eyes I think, its military strength and the fact that it had overcome the once powerful Bemba chiefs, and later, as new economic values were acquired, its apparently endless wealth.[2] But when talking with elder natives one is aware how largely the pattern of fear and personal allegiance accorded to the old chiefs was transferred with little modification to the new authorities. The same terms are used for both: there is the same assumption that the tax, game-laws, and even the paid employment of natives are all dues demanded by the Government for its own aggrandisement, as was the tribute of the chiefs in the old days.[3] There is much the same belief in the ruler's complete omnipotence, and a similar expectation of sudden arbitrary action, even as I noticed, when the most good-natured and reasonable officials appeared to be concerned. It is no exaggeration to state that each Government station is in effect a native capital or *umunumba*. Each has its district officer, an authority like the chief with a following to whom allegiance may mean advance, and who is regarded with mingled fear and loyalty. Each has its force of messengers and police, employs its own labour.

177 797 The missionary bodies in the country must also be regarded as new authorities set up in the tribe. The White Fathers entered the Bemba country just ahead of the B.S.A. administration and set up their first post near Kasama, in the heart of the Bemba country. They can still be said to dominate this central district, although the Church of Scotland Mission and the London Missionary Society also operate elsewhere. Each different mission station must also be regarded as an *umunumba*. Many

[1] cf. Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the financial and economic position of Northern Rhodesia (1938), p. 179.

[2] Older natives seemed to me to comment most on the ferocity of the Government officials (*ubukali*), and the younger to speak of the wealth of the Administration.

[3] It is common for old men and women to refer to their sons who have either been recruited or else gone voluntarily to the mines as having been 'seized by the Government', and to speak of opportunities arranged for the sale of their grain as having their food 'seized' by the native commissioner.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

are big establishments, with enormous and impressive cathedrals. They own and cultivate ground, attract a following, have villages on their estates regarded as 'mission people,' just as the *bena mukuluba* are considered to be the personal following of a chief. Each society, again, has introduced what is, in native eyes, its own new code of laws, often differing from those of the Government and those of the chiefs, e.g. most missions prohibit polygamy, some divorce, others beer-drinking, dancing, or religious ceremonial of different kinds. In native eyes at present there are certain well-known rules binding on the Christian members of the community, sometimes even bringing them into conflict with the other authorities of the society, the district official and the chief, and a new category of offence known as *fya bwesuki* ('things of heathendom'), or *fya kale* ('things of the past') believed to be strongly condemned.[1]

Besides their own villagers, the missionary societies exert authority over Christians scattered in nearly every community in the territory, and their grip over these distant 'subjects' must in some cases be just as strong as those of the chiefs of old days. At the Roman Catholic missions at any rate, each baby of Christian parents is registered and summoned at the right time for instruction, however far away he or she lives. Each village is constantly visited by travelling native teachers and evangelists, and by the white missionaries themselves.

The sanctions of the missionaries' authority are many. On the positive side, their teaching and their way of living command a new allegiance and a new opportunity for advance and their personalities very often inspire admiration, affection, and personal loyalty. On the negative side, there is the introduction of a new supernatural sanction quite as powerful as those that supported the chief's authority,[2] and the threat to withdraw the Christian members of a community in which the Christian law is being flouted by a headman or prominent member. This acts as a powerful deterrent in the case of many Roman Catholic villages,

[1] This last is, of course, an injustice to the modern missionary, who is often one of the first to try to encourage interest in and respect for native customs.

[2] The fear of hell-fire, and, in the case of the older and less educated natives, the fear of curses seriously believed to be uttered by missionaries, evidently on the strength of some such statement as 'God will punish you if you behave like that'—such a belief being almost inevitable in an area where chiefs were thought to have power to curse.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

since the break-up of the whole settlement may become inevitable in such circumstances.

There are no other organized bodies of Europeans in this area —no big bodies of farmers or settlers, for instance. But it may be said that all Europeans are in a sense in a position of authority. They all have the sanction of wealth and the power of employing a following. All have the high social status that enables them to talk to a chief as an equal, or more usually as an inferior, and all are believed by the natives to be backed, whether right or wrong, by the administrative officers of the district however unjustifiably.

Besides these new authorities introduced into the political arena, the power of the Bemba chief is inevitably reduced by his economic position, which must have grown increasingly bad since the first days of European occupation. The Bemba rulers were never rich compared to a number of African potentates. Theirs is a poor country. They possess no cattle which could be converted to money under modern conditions; the ivory of their country no longer belongs to them, nor their mineral rights. Land has no financial value as yet, and the salaries given to chiefs have always been low compared to the income, say, of the paramount chief of the Barotse.[1] Added to this, the service on which the Bemba chiefs depended is cut down by half or more by the absence of men at the mines, and what remains is often given unwillingly. These chiefs never apparently exacted court fines as a regular thing, after the fashion of the cattle-owning Bantu, and have not yet put a levy on the earnings of men away at the mines, as has been done in some parts of South Africa.

In view of these facts, it may be asked how the power of the *Bena pondo* survived at all up till 1929, when a determined effort was made to restore it. Partly because of their closely knit kinship structure, but also, I think, because of the strength of the supernatural beliefs on which their authority was so largely based. These were certainly weakened by the introduction of Christianity and the prevention or discouragement of many tribal rites, but it is impossible to treat them as mere survivals at the present day. Even young men are affected by such beliefs. For much the same reasons, the chiefs' courts continued to function alongside of the

[1] The Barotse chief receives an annual subsidy of £1,700, together with £850 from the British South Africa Company and £1,500 from the Zambesi saw-mills, as compared to the £60 a year of the Bemba paramount.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

District Commissioner's courts in spite of thirty years or so of non-recognition. Natives took there the cases they believed the European magistrates did not understand, i.e. ritual matters, affairs with their roots in past history, and certain civil actions. Thus there were still some functions which the people believed the Bemba chief could perform better than all the new white authorities in the territory, besides the great historic tradition behind his authority.

Effects of the 1929 Ordinances. By the Native Authority and Native Courts Ordinances of 1929 a form of Indirect Rule was introduced into Northern Rhodesia, the power of the authorities then instituted being still further extended and more closely defined by a subsequent Ordinance of 1936. Chiefs, and in some cases councils of chiefs, were constituted as native authorities by these measures. They were given jurisdiction over definite territories, and encouraged to issue orders on matters of hygiene, bush-burning, the movement of natives, the constitution of villages, &c. Native courts were also recognized and given jurisdiction over all cases except witchcraft, murder, issues involving Europeans, &c. The chiefs were given salaries, small in actual fact and quite inadequate to the needs of an administrator at the present time,[1] yet in the eyes of natives, who are unaccustomed to see large sums of money at any one time, they were substantial marks of Government favour and often described as such. Clerks and *kapasu* (messengers), at exceedingly low salaries, were also attached to the courts. No financial control was given until recently (1936), when native treasuries were set up.[2]

As far as I could judge,[3] this new policy certainly did much to restore the personal prestige of the chiefs. The loss of an authority which was largely based on ritual was compensated for to some extent by the evident support of the Government. Most Bemba realize clearly that their chiefs are still merely servants of the Administration and note the fact that they cannot imprison or try the most important cases, and that their judgements are liable to be reversed, but they often commented to me on what seemed to

[1] Citimukulu receives £60 per annum, Mwamba £30, and the other chiefs less in proportion. For details showing the inadequacy of these amounts cf. my 'Tribal Government in Transition', *Journ. African Society*, vol. xxxiv, 1935.

[2] The Bemba Treasury had a balance of £143 in 1938 on a sum of £1,303 to be divided between six districts. See *Report* cited on p. 114.

[3] I arrived in the country the year after the introduction of these measures.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

177 622 692 them evident signs of favour bestowed by the new policy on their rulers. As we saw, the judicial machinery of the Bemba never really disappeared with the institution of white courts, but the legal recognition of the chiefs' courts by the 1929 Ordinance certainly increased the latter's status tremendously. Successive Government reports have described the new native courts as functioning well, while few charges of excessive fines or hearing fees have been made against the chiefs. Such complaints as I heard seemed to come mainly from educated natives belonging to other areas, particularly from Nyasaland, who found themselves subject for the first time to Bemba law. In the legislative field, determined efforts were made by the district officials to restore the self-confidence of the native authorities and to encourage them, not only to resume functions of government they had lost, but also to take on new tasks, such as the issue of orders as to hygiene, &c. In fact, as regards the personal position of the Bemba chiefs, it may be said that there was a gradual increase in status due to Government support, added to a respect and fear which had never been entirely lost. Their power is in many ways surprising, in view of their poverty, their lack of means to enforce any decisions taken, and the presence in their territories of other authorities in command of their subjects and in particular of large numbers of Christians bound by codes that are not recognized in the chiefs' courts.[1]

177 622 692 695 Apart from the chief's own position, it is necessary to review the political system as a whole. How far was the old machinery of Government re-established by the introduction of the 1929 Ordinances? And, more important still, is such a machinery adapted to the new needs of the tribe? The answer to the first question is a decided, 'No'. The whole balance of authority has been altered, partly by the changed economic position of the chief and partly by lack of Government recognition. We saw that the executive and judicial officials on whom the chief relied were kept together by hope of rewards and food and in some cases in virtue of their religious functions. Nowadays the chief is less able to feed his councillors, principally owing to the decay of the tribute labour system. He does not consider himself obliged to distribute

[1] Some missionary societies have followed the Government policy and have invited chiefs to take a part in school education committees, &c.; others have viewed any increase in the chief's authority as a retrograde step.

7: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

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money in the same way as food, and in any case has not sufficient to enable him to reward his people adequately. So that at a time when he is asked to take on new functions of administration his following is becoming smaller and smaller. I have seen Citimukulu hearing cases alone with his paid clerk and watched the *bakabilo* melting away during the midst of the discussion of important matters owing to want of food. This makes an impossible situation which may be changed for the better by the greater measure of financial control which the Government has recently granted to the native authorities,[1] though the sums now allotted to native treasuries are small, and lack of funds has always prevented the compensation of chiefs for the lack of their tribute labour and other perquisites that has occurred in Nigeria, Barotseland, and elsewhere.

Government recognition of the political organization of the tribe and its purposeful adaptation to modern conditions is also essential at the present time. Apart from the economic breakdown at the chiefs' courts which has just been indicated, much of the trouble has been due to the fact that no serious investigation of the judicial, executive, and advisory machinery of Government was made in the first instance. Chiefs were constituted as authorities with little study of the way in which their orders were to be enforced. They were listed as 'members of court', but, though headmen and council were mentioned as eligible to sit on such courts, the presence of the latter was not apparently compulsory. The *bakabilo's* important advisory functions as a tribal council and a potential regency council were not recognized until anthropological research in the area had been made.[1] The unfortunate result was that the chief felt free to act without this former check on his power and openly expressed to me his delight in the fact. The councillors, on the other hand, felt discouraged, and declared: 'The Government likes the chiefs. It does not listen to us, the *Babemba*.' Hence a political system that could never have been described as democratic now provides less check than ever on the chief's authority.

The difficulty from an administrative point of view is evident. Here is a system of political authority based largely on hereditary ritual privilege. To abandon the *bakabilo* council is to do without a body of men with strong traditions of government and a sense of

[1] Twenty-five of the *bakabilo* are now given £1 a year (see *Report* cited, p. 144).

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

the public weal; to rely on them without at the same time training them in new functions, and adding to them other elements, especially for the more educated members of the tribe, is to build on a foundation that cannot endure, and to deny to the commoner the experience of administration he will require to have in the future. Similarly, the co-ordination of the activities of each of the smaller political units known as *ifyalo* is at present one which is based on the intimate relationship between the chiefs ruling each, and the ritual which unites them. There is no official representation of each district on the Paramount Council, since all the *bakabilo* are drawn from his own territory, however much they consider themselves responsible for the affairs of the whole tribe. Ritual prohibitions still prevent the frequent meetings of the big territorial chiefs themselves, though they do occasionally come together at Government *ndabas* outside their own capitals. Hence, if it ever became necessary to provide for closer co-ordination of the different districts or for local representation, it appears that a general tribal council of the type of the National Council of the Basuto or the *libandla* of the Swazi would have to be constituted in this tribe.